No polio case in Balochistan for 15 months, says PM's aide

• Ayesha Raza attributes the achievement to effective strategies and sustained anti-polio campaigns • Urges parents to ensure vaccination for children under five during the polio drive starting February 2

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Senator Ayesha Raza, has said that although the poliovirus still exists in some areas of the province, no polio case has been reported from any part of Balochistan for the past 15 months due to an effective and sustained strategy and successful anti-polio campaigns.

She made these remarks while speaking to the media after meeting polio workers on Thursday. She urged parents to ensure that their children under the age of five years receive polio drops and vaccinations during the anti-polio campaign starting from February 2.

Senator Ayesha Raza paid tribute to the courage and dedication of frontline workers, particularly women, who continue to go door to door to vaccinate children despite challenging conditions. She said that the complete eradication of poliovirus is only possible through the tireless efforts of these workers.

She noted that accountability measures have been taken against individuals found negligent during the polio campaigns. Referring to funding challenges, she said that although Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding has declined, the reduction would not be allowed to affect the polio eradication programme. She added that steps are also being taken to increase the salaries of polio workers.

Ms Raza said that Balochistan is a critically important region for polio eradication, and her visit to Quetta reflects the prime minister's clear message that the province remains a top national priority. She emphasised that without strong and sustained progress in Balochistan, the complete eradication of polio from Pakistan is not possible.

During her visit, she said, she met the chief minister and the chief secretary of Balochistan and assured them of the federal government's full support for polio eradication efforts in the province. She praised the commitment of the provincial government, which she said has played a key role in maintaining momentum in the fight against polio.

Describing frontline workers as the backbone of Pakistan's polio eradication programme, Senator Ayesha Raza said that more than 400,000 frontline workers are engaged in polio campaigns across the country, including Balochistan. Despite difficult conditions, she said, their dedication and hard work remain the real strength behind ongoing anti-polio efforts.

She highlighted the crucial role of women frontline workers in accessing children, particularly in areas where concerns and resistance to polio vaccination persist. As the Gender Champion of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), she reaffirmed her commitment to ensuring a safe, dignified, and supportive working environment for women.

She further said that during her visit she held direct interactions with women frontline workers to hear their views, learn from their experiences, and take practical steps to address their issues so they can perform their duties with dignity. She stressed the importance of including women workers in national-level policymaking and decision-making processes to effectively resolve issues related to their work.

Senator Ayesha Raza concluded by saying that supporting and encouraging women associated with the polio eradication programme — whether working on the frontline or at any other level — is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders.

DAVOS: (left to right) PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir exchange views on the sidelines of World Economic Forum.—White Star

PM, army chief hold key meetings on WEF sidelines

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir on Thursday held informal meetings with various world leaders on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

The two met with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, according to a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

PM Shehbaz, Field Marshal Munir and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar also met Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on the sidelines of the WEF.

In a post on X, Dar said he and the field marshal met Fidan moments before the ceremony, writing, "Pakistani and Turkish nations share a strong bond which has stood the test of time and is cherished deeply by both nations."

In a subsequent post, Mr Dar wrote that after concluding their engagements for the day, the four of them shared "lighter moments" before leaving Davos.

From Davos, PM Shehbaz later flew to London.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb met with billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates on the sidelines of the WEF.

The meeting focused on Pakistan's ongoing reform efforts, public health priorities, and avenues for strengthening cooperation with the Gates Foundation in support of sustainable development and institutional capacity building.—Dawn Report

MQM, PPP trade barbs over demand for 'federal Karachi'

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administrative incompetence and criminal neglect. He also launched a scathing attack on the PPP, saying it had ruled Sindh for the past 18 years but continued to blame MQM for its failures.

He said the mayor's office, the provincial government and even power-sharing arrangements at the federal level had remained under PPP influence, arguing there was no justification for shifting blame.

Referring to Karachi's troubled past, Mr Kamal said MQM-P workers had made "immense sacrifices" to rid the city of foreign interference, alleging that for 25 years Karachi had suffered under the influence of India's intelligence agency, RAW.

"Our youth laid down their lives and handed over truckloads of weapons to the state to end that menace," he said, adding that Karachi had instead been handed over to what he described as "democratic terrorism".

Calling for immediate intervention, he demanded that Karachi be placed under federal administration under Articles 148 and 149 of the Constitution, stressing that the Sindh administration had become dysfunctional.

"The federal government remains reluctant to act out of fear of upsetting the PPP despite the worsening situation in the country's largest city," he said.

Mr Kamal also said the MQM-P had finalised its strategy regarding the proposed 28th Constitutional Amendment and warned that if the party's proposed changes to safeguard the rights of urban populations were not approved, it would consider resigning from its ministerial positions and parliamentary seats.

Within an hour, Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon came up with a strong reaction, accusing the MQM-P of politicising the Gul Plaza incident. Speaking at a press conference, he said "certain parties" were attempting to exploit the tragedy while the Sindh government was showing "great patience".

"You call yourself the party of the entire city, so you have the right to criticise, but they start making other sorts of statements in the guise of criticism," he said, indirectly mentioning Mr Kamal's press conference.

Mr Memon said the fire was an incident, but alleged that those who had "carried out such incidents" in the city were now making such remarks. "Those parties are talking that have even burned people alive for extortion," he said.

He said he was "forced to respond" because "serious allegations" were being levelled against the PPP.

"The Baldia factory was set on fire, innocent people were deprived of their lives and the human hunting game was played on May 12 [2007]. Such statements from your mouth do not suit you," he said.

During the press conference, Mr Memon played old video clips of Mr Kamal in which he was heard making allegations against MQM-P leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and coalition ally PML-N, and using abusive language.

He also questioned why Mr Kamal, as the federal health minister, had not visited Gul Plaza or asked whether any assistance was needed in any matter.

"When your quaid [Altaf Hussain] used to give a strike call, when your workers used to count a score of 100 and kill people on the roads, and when bodies in sacks were found daily, did you not remember humanity then?" he questioned.

PTA recounts failed attempts at blocking Imran's X account

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PTI founder's account. X blocked only one tweet, while the remaining requests were rejected.

The PTA informed the court that it had contacted X multiple times over the past three and a half years, attempting to convince the social media platform X to either shut down the account or remove its content, but all these attempts were unsuccessful.

The PTA told the court that social media companies had been directed to register with the relevant authority in Pakistan and appoint local representatives. However, none of these companies had complied, nor had they appointed any legal persons in Pakistan.

The report said that these companies were registered in their respective countries and did not consider the laws of other states to be binding, maintaining that complaints from different countries were dealt with in accordance with their own internal laws and policies.

Govt defends Gaza board membership

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Shehbaz Sharif would be sitting shoulder to shoulder.

'Global pressure'

He regretted that Pakistan's policies were shaped under international pressure. "We have never formulated our foreign policy purely in our national interest," he remarked. He pointed out that Pakistan's founder Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had declared Israel illegitimate in 1948. He asked whether the nation had ever paused to think about, let alone act upon, the founder's words.

"It is the government's duty to inform what decisions it is making. If not the House, did you at least take the cabinet into confidence?" he asked.

The Maulana recalled that before signing the Simla Agreement, former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took the entire House into confidence, and both treasury and opposition supported him because 90,000 Pakistani prisoners were in captivity.

"On an issue as sensitive as Al-Aqsa, there was no need felt to take the nation into confidence," he lamented.

He questioned the formation of a Board of Peace when the United Nations and Security Council already existed. "Does this not amount to a parallel authority?"

The JUI-F chief blamed the Western countries for turning Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya into ruins.

He noted that bloodshed had continued in Pakistan itself for 25 years.

The Maulana further said there might be peace in Lahore, Faisalabad, and Sahiwal, but his own districts were in a constant state of unrest.

"My districts are under the control of armed groups, they collect taxes. Security institutions are handing over their posts to them — look at Lakki Marwat and Tank. Where I live, there are mountains on both sides, and those areas are under their [militants'] control. No construction work can take place unless extortion money is paid to them," he added.

"This is the condition of our own country, and you are going to Gaza and becoming part of their oppression," he said, adding that while Palestinians were helpless, policies still needed to be kept right.

PTI rejects move

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan also regretted that PM Shehbaz had welcomed the 'Board of Peace' without any consultation at home. Speaking in the House, he said the Foreign Office announced Pakistan's joining of the board while ignoring parliament, and questioned whether Pakistan would play any role in disarming Hamas.

"If it were a UN body, the government could have acted on its own. The board is not a UN body," he observed.

Talking to *Dawn*, PTI stalwart Asad Qaiser said that it was unfortunate that the government did not bother to take such a sensitive decision with consensus.

"At least they should have discussed it in parliament to give a false impression to the global community that we have democracy in Pakistan," the former speaker of the National Assembly added.

To a question, Mr Qaiser said that there could be severe repercussions of the decision, as it could compromise the relationship of Pakistan and its people with other Muslim countries, as well as with the Palestinian people.

PTI Central Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram, while talking to *Dawn*, regretted that there was not a single Palestinian representative on the 'Board of Peace'. "Any decision that will not be acceptable to Palestinians will not be acceptable to PTI," he added.

PTI's parliamentary leader in the Senate Barrister Ali Zafar told *Dawn* he believed that such an important step, with far-reaching consequences for the nation, could not be decided "unilaterally by the executive or the federal government alone".

"A decision that affects the future direction of Pakistan, its foreign policy, and its moral standing must be taken by parliament, representing the collective will of the people," he added.

Two viewpoints

Mr Zafar elaborated that there were two competing viewpoints on this issue.

"One view holds that by joining this force, Pakistan may be indirectly facilitating the broader strategic objectives of Greater Israel and thereby becoming complicit in the subjugation of the Palestinian people. According to this perspective, Pakistan should not become part of such a force," he said.

"The other view is that the Palestinians themselves are calling for assistance, and that this is a moment when Muslim countries must stand together. Proponents of this view argue that since countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkiye are reportedly part of the force, Pakistan should also participate in solidarity with the Palestinian cause," he added.

"Before deciding which view is correct, all relevant facts must be placed before parliament, so that the nation may reach a collective, informed decision."

No move to raise voting age, says minister

ISLAMABAD: Amid discussions about a possible move to raise the voting age from 18 to 25, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday denied that any such legislation was under consideration.

While no formal bill to this effect has been tabled yet, the idea is being floated through media commentary, social media narratives, and informal political signalling.

On Wednesday, five senior PTI leaders incarcerated at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat opposed any change in the voting age, asking whether those "operating in the dark" were afraid of the youth's power.

In a post on the social media platform X, Mr Iqbal called the reports "baseless".

In the video accompanying the post, the minister said, "We have confidence in our youth and we can't even think of depriving them of the right to vote."

"Pakistan's youth are our asset and they are capable of deciding what is best for the country's future," he said.—Dawn Report

Cloud service unveiled for local data storage

By Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: The Fauji Foundation group on Thursday launched a cloud and artificial intelligence platform, saying it would help meet growing demand for secure, locally hosted digital storage, particularly for state institutions.

The platform, named 'Sky47 Cloud and AI', was inaugurated by Fauji Foundation Chairman retired Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hyder. Organisers described Sky47 as the country's largest cloud and AI infrastructure currently in operation.

According to details shared at the launch, the facility comprises more than 3,000 racks with a power capacity of up to 50MW, and has been designed for high-density artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) workloads, including liquid-cooling capability.

Speaking at the event, the Fauji Foundation chairman said digital infrastructure had become central to national development and called for building resilient platforms that could strengthen Pakistan's economic and technological independence. He said the project aimed to support long-term requirements for secure and reliable data hosting within the country.

Officials said Sky47 offers scalable "sovereign cloud" infrastructure for enterprises and hyperscalers, with a modular design intended to allow future expansion.

They said the platform was designed to provide enterprise-grade, locally hosted services to enable businesses, government institutions and innovators to deploy mission-critical workloads within Pakistan while meeting international standards for security, reliability and compliance. They added that Sky47 has been set up as a separate department, with infrastructure engineered for high-density cloud environments and AI-ready computing capacity. The platform, they said, is designed to support advanced digital workloads across sectors, including finance, telecommunications, government services, healthcare and AI-driven industries.

Sky47 Chief Executive Officer Hassan Abbas said the platform responded to a national requirement for locally hosted, enterprise-grade cloud and AI services.

He noted that the project had been built with a long-term vision to serve as a foundational layer for Pakistan's digital economy.

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ADDENDUM / CORRIGENDUM

Procurement of Consultancy Services for Transaction Advisor related to EOBI's Proposed Real Estate Investment in Mixed Use Development Projects, comprising Five Star Hotels, Serviced Apartments and Corporate Offices, on Two Plot, located in Sector F-5/1, Islamabad

Reference Proposals No. PRIMACO (EOBI) – TA/01/2026 for ***Procurement of Consultancy Services for Transaction Advisor related to EOBI's Proposed Real Estate Investment in Mixed Use Development Projects, comprising Five Star Hotels, Serviced Apartments and Corporate Offices, on Two Plot, located in Sector F-5/1, Islamabad*** published on PPRA, EPADS & PRIMACO websites and "Dawn & Jang" Newspapers dated 09th January, 2026.

The Bidders are hereby informed that the Bid Submission date is extended as under:

Particulars	Original Date & Time	Revised Date & Time
Bid submission Closing date	26 January 2026 at 1400 HRS	02 February 2026 at 1400 HRS
Bid submission Opening date	26 January 2026 at 1430 HRS	02 February 2026 at 1430 HRS

1. All other terms and conditions of the Bidding document shall remain unchanged.
2. This Addendum / Corrigendum is also accessible on the websites of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (www.ppra.gov.pk), EPADS (www.eprocure.gov.pk), PRIMACO (www.primaco.com.pk), and through "Dawn and Jang" Newspapers.

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